November 28, 1968

UNITED STATES TOBACCO JOURNAL

Philip Morris Palm Springs Party Honors Johnny, "An American Legend in His Time"

PALM SPRINGS, CALIF. — Television stars and many tobacco industry leaders gathered here recently to honor Johnny Philip Morris on his 35th anniversary as the world's most durable living trademark.

Among those attending the party at the El Mirador Hilton Hotel, scene of the joint meetings of the California Association of Tobacco and Candy Distributors and the National Association of Tobacco Distributors, were Eva Gabor of "Green Acres"; Martin Landau, Barbara Bain, Greg Morris and Dick Davis of "Mission Impossible"; Ken Berry, George Lindsey, Arlene Golonka and Jack Dodson of "Mayberry R.F.D."; Kathy Garver of "Family Affair" and Sigrid Valdis of "Hogan's Heros." All are TV stars of Philip Morris-sponsored shows on CBS. Hosting the anniversary event was Pat Buttram, star of "Green Acres."

Johnny Philip Morris

Johnny was discovered while a page boy at the New Yorker Hotel. The late Alfred E. Lyon, then a vice president of Philip Morris who later became the company's chairman, and Milton Biow, a well known advertising agency executive, signed the 48-inch personality to a contract in 1933.

"What began as a unique idea became a popular personality. What began as an advertising promotion became a part of Americana. What began as a living trademark became a living legend," said James C. Bowling, Philip Morris vice president, in honoring Johnny. "His nobility of character communicated itself across the airwaves and from posters and billboards everywhere. All America was touched by this remarkable personality and took him to its heart."

A 35th anniversary commemorative booklet reviewing Johnny's career was presented at the party. In the booklet's dedication to Johnny, Philip Morris Chairman Joseph F. Cullman 3rd points out that Johnny "has earned a rare distinction of becoming an American legend in his own lifetime. If Johnny had his wish, this booklet no doubt would be dedicated to the public, or as he would say, "all the people I have worked with, and met, and helped to smile."

Johnny, who was present in his familiar page boy's red and black uniform, responded to the tribute: "If ever I have helped make you smile or brought a little happiness into your lives, then you have made my life that much richer."

In his 35-year association with Philip Morris, Johnny has seen the company grow from a single brand manufacturer to a multi-brand, highly diversified corporation.

Johnny was first heard on the air April 17, 1933 on "The Ferde Grofe Show," an evening program built around the composer's orchestra and billed in the Philip Morris trade announcements as "the finest orchestra that ever struck Broadway." For the first time that day the entertainment page advertisements for the program were signed "Call for Philip Morris."

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